



Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Farm and Food Report is produced weekly by the Zapwell Communications Group for
Communications Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

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Log Number: 07-32-149
Week of August 6, 2007

HONOUR HERITAGE BY CELEBRATING AT THE YORKTON COWBOY FESTIVAL

It is time once again to pay tribute to the ranching culture and heritage by celebrating at the third annual Yorkton Cowboy Festival. The event honours the skills, interests and horsemanship of the working cowboy.

The festival will be held on the Yorkton Exhibition Grounds at the west entrance to the City of Yorkton from Friday, August 10 to Sunday, August 12.

The festival began in order to commemorate western heritage and culture that has been passed down from previous generations. The festival is also intended to further the development of a "ranch culture" and to foster the spirit of living in the Yorkton area, as well as to attract tourists and economic activity to the region.

"Looking back into our history prior to the traditional grain farming era, ranching and the life of a working cowboy were the original beginnings of agriculture in Saskatchewan," stated Naomi Paley, Livestock Development Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. "The festival is an event that highlights this history and heritage."

"In the last five or so years, we have seen a lot of new families with ranching backgrounds moving to the east-central region of the province from Alberta or British Columbia. We wanted to create an event to not only celebrate ranching, but to welcome these new individuals and to help integrate them into the community," added Paley.

"The Cowboy Festival is a way for new people to come together with local people and help them feel like they are at home here," she said.

This year's event brings a few added bonuses to the traditional festival. The Friday night event features not only western music but also cowboy poetry, with western singer, entertainer and cartoon artist Ben Crane headlining.

An artist with multiple talents, Ben Crane comes from the Alberta ranchlands just east of Rocky Mountain House.

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"His love for the west country and the outdoors comes through not only in his music, but in his artwork as well," said Paley. "He is a western cartoonist, and his musical stylings include traditional country with hints of bluegrass, jazz, blues and swing."

A number of other artists, including Jake Peters, Morley Thorpe and Doris Bircham, will be performing as well.

Adding to the fun is another new event. A chore team competition will be taking place Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

"This event is a real crowd-pleaser, featuring teams of working chore horses. Teamsters will guide their horses through an obstacle course consisting of tasks that a working team would encounter as part of a day's work. So far, we have seen a lot of interest for this event, so there should be a good turnout," stated Paley.

Both heavy and light chore teams will compete and will be judged on accuracy and time. Awards will follow the show.

The festival is open to the public, and all ages are encouraged to attend. The event is unique in that it portrays the everyday working rancher in an accurate light. Attendees will experience what takes place on an actual ranch.

"The events in the ranch rodeo are very much fashioned after everyday events that working cowboys or cowgirls would do on their farms or ranches. Not a lot of people get to see that anymore, so it is very interesting," said Paley.

The event runs the entire weekend. No admission will be charged on Sunday.

For more information on the Yorkton Cowboy Festival, visit www.yorktoncowboyfestival.com or call the festival office at (306) 782-2108.

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THINKING BEYOND THE WHEAT FIELD

A Regina-based company is poised to expand a line of domestically made, ready-to-eat products.

Prairie Food Products is a family-owned business that is taking up the challenge of "thinking beyond the wheat field" when it comes to the Saskatchewan food industry.

The company produces a number of value-added products – but one particular item you might not expect to be made in Saskatchewan is offering significant potential: calzones.

Calzones are a semi-circle of deliciousness that are sometimes referred to as a "stuffed pizza." Calzones are a turnover filled with different types of meat and cheese.

Prairie Food Products General Manager Boutros Skaf says there is a huge opportunity for the product, both here in Saskatchewan and across the country.

"Every calzone that is coming into Canada right now is coming in from the United States, so there is not one calzone that is coming out of Canada," he said.

That's where Boutros' Calzones come in. Prairie Food Products has developed three different flavours for the tasty treats – ham, pepperoni and chicken, spinach and feta – and are now selling them in a number of locations in the province.

Skaf says the product is almost completely home-grown.

"Everything is Saskatchewan-made except for the cheese, which comes from Saputo out of Montreal. Everything else originates from right here in the province. We found pretty much everything here," he stated.

Boutros' Calzones have been a labour of love for Skaf. It has taken considerable time and money to get the product from the test kitchen to the consumer through stores such as 7-11. However, Skaf is grateful for the help his company received from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's Agri-Value Program.

"They were very supportive in helping us link up with other companies, and helped a lot with money, research and development, and marketing assistance," he said.

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"There are a lot of hoops to go through to get a product out. Putting out a single product can cost as much as \$10,000 just for printing, nutritional information, branding and packaging. For us, it was pretty much \$10,000 a flavour just to get going."

The company is now looking to expand with a new facility that will allow them to distribute the product nationally, and is looking to introduce more value-added products, including a line of baked pita chips.

Skaf says the Extreme Pita chain is interested in distributing the chips, which are unique in that they are flavoured before they are baked. He notes that the folks at Extreme Pita were impressed with the product and recognized Saskatchewan's natural advantages.

"We have two advantages when it comes to baking good bread: a dry climate and hard water," he laughed. "That's the best thing for baking bread."

Skaf says Prairie Food Products is committed to Saskatchewan and creating new opportunities here for value-added food products. This pride shows up on the company's website, www.prairiepita.com, where it says: "Our families are dedicated to being community leaders and believe re-investing in Saskatchewan is important. We are proud of who we are and we want everyone to know we live, work and play in Saskatchewan by choice."

According to Skaf, "There is an opportunity here that is like no other."

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THE STICKER IS IN THE MAIL

There is another good reason for Saskatchewan producers to keep an eye out for a letter from their grain company. It may not be as exciting as a grain cheque, but the "Canola Ready" sticker arriving in the mail could save them a lot of money.

At issue is the insecticide malathion.

Chris Anderson, the Canola Council of Canada's program manager for crop production, says storage bins treated with malathion can't be used to store canola for six to 12 months after its application.

"Malathion is most often used for insect control in cereal crops, but it's not allowed for use in canola. Sometimes farmers treat their bins thinking they will be storing cereals later in the year – but then they store canola, or can't remember which bin was treated and which bin was not," Anderson said.

"The sticker we created is a helpful reminder. When they have set aside a bin for canola, they can put the sticker on it so that they can easily identify or remember which one they intended to use for the oilseed."

The stickers are timely, since it's the time of year when many producers begin getting the bins ready for the coming harvest. This year has also seen a record number of acres seeded to canola, meaning that there may be some first-time growers of the crop who might not be aware of the strict rules regarding malathion.

A simple oversight can be costly.

Anderson says that malathion residue detected in canola exported out of Canada could cost the industry, including farmers, millions of dollars in lost business.

"Every country sets limits on pesticide residues, and exceeding those limits will result in rejected shipments and increased testing requirements," he stated. "For example, Japan enforces strict food safety laws that prohibit the entry of any commodity exhibiting pesticide residues above the allowable limit."

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Anderson says most stored canola doesn't need an insecticide treatment anyway, because insects will not feed on sound, healthy canola seed. "However," he noted, "if canola is in poor condition, moisture-loving fungus feeders such as foreign grain beetles, psocids and mites will invade.

"The presence of these insects means it is time to condition your canola through aeration or drying; it does not mean it's time to apply an insecticide such as malathion."

Anderson says that growers are better off focusing on preventative measures. He says canola that is reasonably free of chaff, other seeds and foreign material should be stored in clean bins and kept below 15 degrees Celsius and eight per cent moisture to keep it free of insects.

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HOW TO AVOID SPRAY DRIFT

As pre-harvest spraying gets underway, a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatoon is reminding farmers to take precautions to avoid spray drift.

Dr. Tom Wolf says spray drift can cause considerable economic and environmental damage.

"The environment is a foremost concern for both the public and for farmers. We ask that they make sure that, when they do spray, they protect anything that is a non-target, whether it is another crop, a body of water or a shelterbelt. Some of the herbicides we use in pre-harvest can be quite detrimental to water sources or shelterbelts. One of the most common products, glyphosate, can in fact kill shelterbelts outright if it is not applied properly, so spray drift control is very important during a pre-harvest application," said Wolf.

Wolf says there are a number of tools and tips to prevent spray drift, but the most effective tool is located under a ball cap -- the spray operator.

"Ultimately, it is the operator who has to make the choice about whether to spray or not and about how the spray will be applied," explains Wolf, "but beyond that, weather is also a critical factor."

Wolf says ideal conditions are a sunny day, with a slight breeze, and at least a couple hours after sunrise.

The fact that a slight breeze is ideal may seem counter-intuitive, but Wolf says there are benefits to a breeze.

"Most people look for calm days, but when it is calm, sooner or later there will be some wind and it will be difficult to predict what direction it will come from or when it will come. So, in order to prevent spray drift it is better to have a predictable wind direction," said Wolf.

The other key factor in ideal conditions is to spray at least a couple of hours after sunrise. Wolf says that is to avoid temperature inversions.

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"Temperature inversion occurs on most summer nights. It is a calm and stable atmosphere that will see any spray drift hang over the crop. That spray drift will stay concentrated in a stable atmosphere. That means it does not get diluted. So, when it does move off target, which it eventually will, it remains quite potent and can cause a great deal of harm. That's why we want a slight breeze during spraying. The breeze disperses that spray so it actually mixes in the atmosphere so that the spray drift causes minimal harm," explains Wolf.

However, Wolf concedes that ideal conditions can't always be found.

"Let's assume you are in a situation where you just simply have to spray. There are still a number of ways you can bring yourself back into a safe application scenario. One of those ways is to use the proper droplet size. Pre-harvest application is very well suited to the use of low drift nozzles such as an air induced nozzle. When you move to those nozzles, you can reduce your drift from a conventional spray by over 70 per cent. That is a very significant reduction," said Wolf.

For more information on spray drift, visit the following websites:

http://res2.agr.gc.ca/saskatoon/result/letter9703-lettre9703_c.htm

<http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/environment/cps0397.asp>

http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/production/faq_choosingnozzles.asp

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TASTE OF THE SOUTHWEST WILL CATER TO YOUR TASTEBUDS

Prepare your taste buds: the Taste of the Southwest is again featuring "the best dang food in southwestern Saskatchewan." This mouth-watering event allows consumers to meet food producers and processors, and creates the opportunity to taste a wide variety of their food items.

The second annual Taste of the Southwest will be held on Saturday, August 11, 2007, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This year's event will take place on Central Avenue in downtown Swift Current. The southwest region's producers, processors, caterers and restaurants will be highlighted.

Consumers may sample products to determine what they might want to buy or try again in the future, and they can meet the food producers, processors and restaurants from their local area.

"Last year's event allowed the opportunity for the consuming public and food providers to build relationships that lasted throughout the year," stated Gerry Holland, Regional Business Planning Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.

This year's event will be held in conjunction with the Kinsmen Funfest weekend. A variety of live entertainment will be available all day long, including family-friendly activities such as face painting and games for children. The entertainment agenda is posted on www.southwestreda.ca.

Taste of the Southwest is a very inexpensive way for attendees to sample as many food products as possible in a fun and entertaining environment.

"The goal is not to provide meals, but to allow businesses to feature their food products to a wide range of the public. Last year's event served over 900 people," says Holland.

No admission will be charged this year; however, food tokens will be sold to the public for \$1.00 each. These tokens can then be exchanged at the booths for the customer's desired food items. No item will cost more than four tokens.

Ten per cent of the sales are returned to the organizing committee to offset advertising and rental costs.

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The event is organized by a non-profit committee. This year's organizing committee includes the Southwest Regional Economic Development Authority, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Community Futures Southwest, Golden West Radio, Tourism Swift Current and Saskatchewan Regional Economic and Co-operative Development.

The committee encourages the public to come experience all the wonderful food items, in addition to local Saskatchewan entertainment and children's activities.

"Come out and support local agriculture producers, food processors and restaurants, and sample all the tasty cuisine. You may find a local producer or processor to supply your family with the freshest and best food items ever produced, right here in your back yard," said Holland.

For further information, contact Keleah Herron or Britney Blackmore with the Southwest REDA at (306) 778-4243.

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